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AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Improving Afghan Farm Production

Farmers are acquiring the technical skills necessary to produce high-quality commercial produce



Farmers on a commercial production farm.

Photo: USAID/IDEA-NEW

By establishing commercial production farms and introducing Global GAP standards as a guide for safety and hygiene, USAID is enabling farmers to produce better vegetables in greater quantities.

Vegetables are grown across Afghanistan's eastern region and provide a good reliable source of income for farmers. Most of the produce is sold in local markets, yielding lower prices when compared to upscale national and international markets.

USAID established eight commercial production farms in various districts of Nangarhar Province. Though not certified, these farms closely follow Global GAP standards.

Global GAP is the world's most widely implemented farm certification scheme providing definitive rules for growers to follow. It covers production from farm inputs throughout farming activities until the product leaves the farm and sets standards for the certification of agricultural products around the globe.

USAID supports the farms through the provision of improved seeds and chemical fertilizer, and fencing to avoid contamination of soil and plants by intruding animals. The personnel working on the farm are required to have a complete medical check-up and must use specific uniforms and clean tools. USAID provides salary for two laborers for each commercial production farm, as well as technical assistance in soil preparation, crop layout, and pest and disease management. Training on how and when to use pesticides is provided throughout the crop cycle to ensure the yield meet Global GAP standards.

The use of new agriculture techniques, like planting on raised beds, leveling of land, appropriate field layout, proper use of fertilizers, and succession sowing of the crop, has significantly enhanced vegetable production.

"With classic methods I can grow 3,000 cauliflower plants per jerib of land. But following the guidelines provided by USAID, I planted 7,500 cauliflower plants," said Hazrat Nabi, farmer in Batikot District. "I earned more than 128,000 Afghanis (\$2,800) from my four jeribs of land."

Not only can farmers produce a greater volume of high-quality vegetables produced on a GAP compliant farm, their vegetables enjoy a far higher demand from high-end markets and international consumers, yielding higher prices compared to traditionally grown vegetables.